

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7917

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF

SUBJ: SOVIET MFA OFFICIAL ON PALESTINIAN PROBLEMS AND
GENEVA CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF MAY 24, MFA DEPUTY CHIEF NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DIVISION PYRLIN EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT WOULD TAKE PLACE SHORTLY. FINAL AGREEMENT WOULD BE SIGNED IN GENEVA. ON GENEVA CONFERENCE, HE EMPHASIZED SOVIET VIEW THAT MEPC SHOULD RECONVENE SOON AFTER DISENGAGEMENT TO DISCUSS ALL PROBLEMS OF ME SETTLEMENT. HE AFFIRMED THAT SYRIA WOULD PARTICIPATE IN MEPC BUT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION WAS STILL A PROBLEM, AND IT WOULD HAVE TO BE SOLVED SOON. HE SAID PALESTINIAN ISSUE IS A VEXING ONE BECAUSE PALESTINIANS REMAIN DISUNITED. HOWEVER, PALESTINIAN CONGRESS, WHICH WILL PROBABLY MEET NOT LONG AFTER A SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, CAN MAKE PROGRESS. PYRLIN WAS MORE POSITIVE IN HIS VIEWS OF ARAFAT THAN HE HAS BEEN ON EARLIER OCCASIONS, SAYING SOVIETS BELIEVE HE HAS BECOME "MORE REALISTIC." END SUMMARY

2. PYRLIN HAD LITTLE TO OFFER ON THE SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT TALKS. HE ASSUMED AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED SOON. HE SAID REPORTS FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS INDICATED THAT THE PRINCIPAL REMAINING DIFFICULTY CONCERNED UNITED NATIONS FORCES AND OBSERVERS IN THE DISENGAGEMENT ZONE. INTERESTINGLY, HE MADE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN THESE TWO TYPES OF UN PARTICIPATION. PYRLIN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE FINAL
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DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WOULD BE SIGNED IN GENEVA "IN THE

PRESENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND AMBASSADOR VINOGRADOV." HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE SIGNING MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN THE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN MILITARY WORKING GROUP.

3. ON THE POST-DISENGAGEMENT SCENARIO, PYRLIN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH GOMYKO IN NICOSIA. HE JUXTAPOSED THIS VIEW TO IDEA (WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY AHERTON) THAT NEXT STEP SHOULD BE FURTHER DISENGAGEMENT. RETURNING TO A THEME HE HAS PLAYED BEFORE, HE SAID FOLLOWING DISENGAGEMENT (HE WAS NOT SPECIFIC ABOUT WHETHER THIS MEANT AFTER SIGNING OR IMPLEMENTATION OF AN AGREEMENT) THE MEPC SHOULD TAKE UP ALL ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE SETTLEMENT. WORK WOULD BE HANDLED IN WORKING GROUPS (E.G., ON NAVIGATION IN INTERNATIONAL WATERWAYS, ON PEACE TREATY, ON BOUNDARIES AND DEMILITARIZED ZONES, ETC.). PYRLIN WAS CERTAIN THAT SYRIANS WOULD ATTEND CONFERENCE. ASKED WHETHER SIGNING OF A SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AT GENEVA WOULD MEAN SYRIA HAD JOINED THE MEPC, HE SAID IT WOULD BE A FIRST STEP. MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM WAS QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION, WHICH WAS ONE OF BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING THE CONFERENCE AND A MATTER WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE RESOLVED FAIRLY EARLY.

4. REGARDING PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, PYRLIN, CONSISTENT WITH HIS EARLIER STATEMENTS, SAID THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WITH THE PALESTINIANS IS THAT THEY LACK COHESION AND A POINT OF VIEW. SOVIETS SUPPORT SECURING OF "LEGITIMATE PALESTINIAN RIGHTS." BUT THIS IS "AN EMPTY PHRASE." PALESTINIAN DISUNITY AND THEIR LACK OF PROGRAM MAKES THEIR PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT. DESPITE THIS GLOOMY PICTURE, PYRLIN WAS SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC THAT THE PLO COULD MAKE PROGRESS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

5. HE SAID THE SOVIETS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PALESTINIAN CONGRESS WOULD CONVENE IN JUNE. ASKED IF THIS MEANT AFTER SIGNATURE OF A SYRIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, HE SAID HE THOUGHT SO. CONGRESS WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT, BECAUSE IT IS ORGAN WHICH CAN DEVELOP PALESTINIAN POSITION

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ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION. PYRLIN ALSO MENTIONED MEETING OF PALESTINIAN LAWYERS AND JURISTS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AT END OF MAY IN ALGIERS (HE SAID MEMBERS OF SOVIET AFRO-ASIAN SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE WILL ATTEND THIS MEETING AS OBSERVERS). PYRLIN THOUGHT THAT JURISTS' MEETING MIGHT BE VALUABLE BECAUSE PARTICIPANTS WOULD PROBABLY DISCUSS SOME OF THE PRACTICAL ISSUES CONCERNING PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND FORMULATE PROPOSALS WHICH COULD AID WORK OF THE PALESTINIAN CONGRESS.

6. ASKED ABOUT THE POSITION OF ARAFAT, AND WHETHER HE COULD LEAD THE CONGRESS, PYRLIN SEEMED SOMEWHAT HOPEFUL. HE COMMENTED THAT ARAB SUMMIT HAD ENDORSED PLO AS SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT GROMYKO HAD MET ARAFAT TWICE DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS, AND SOVIETS HAD IMPRESSION THAT ARAFAT "IS BECOMING MORE REALISTIC." ON OTHER HAND, PYRLIN MADE NO COMMENT ON OPPOSITION TO ARAFAT FROM OTHER FEDAYEEN GMOUPS, AND SAID THAT POSITION OF PALESTINIANS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IS UNCLEAR. (PYRLIN'S UNCERTAINTY ABOUT ROLE OF PALESTINIANS ON WEST BANK AND IN GAZA WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN RECENT TALK WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE SOVIET JOURNALIST).

7. REQUEST DEPARTMENT REMOVE EXDIS CAPTION IF APPROPRIATE AND DISTRIBUTE Laterally AS REQUIRED.
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